

## III.

A meeting of the officers of the—th Brigade had been called, and we were all assembled in the cottage which served as Brigade H. Q. The matter under discussion was the selection of an officer for barbed wire work. As the position was an especially dangerous one and did not offer a great opportunity for a long and peaceful life, volunteers were conspicuous only by their absence. Subaltern after subaltern had refused to risk his precious person "foolin' with bally entanglements," and the "powers that be" were in despair. At last the adjutant of Jerry's battalion made a suggestion. "What about that idiot Rowe—the Incompetent" you know—he might as well be dead as alive."

"Wire for him," commanded the Brigadier.

So Jerry was sent for. He arrived a few days later, immaculate and shining as ever, with just a little less of that look of despair in his face.

He took up his work with new spirit, and the strange part was, he made good. During his enforced stay in England he had crammed his head with innumerable facts about barbed wire. His enthusiasm, cool daring and clever work soon became the talk of the division and yet when one mentioned it to an officer of his battalion, one would simply get a contemptuous shrug of the shoulders and the one word—"luck."

One day during our turn in the trenches the Hun bombardment broke out with special fury. The parapets and entanglements in front of our trenches were completely blown away. After nightfall Jerry and his little party crept out to repair the damage to the barbed wire. The work was almost finished when a star shell went up. A rattle of machine gun and rifle fire broke out, then all was silent. Twenty minutes later Jerry crawled back to the trench dragging a wounded corporal—the rest of the party had been killed. The corporal died within a few minutes and Jerry was found to be badly wounded in the leg.

## IV.

After his convalescence, Jerry, who had received the Military Cross and promotion to a captaincy, was detailed for further light duty as Base Censor. Some important information had just leaked out and even officers' letters were ordered to be examined. I had managed to get a few days leave and on my way back through the lines I

dropped in to see Jerry. I expected to find him his normal self again, the old Jerry, my chum of eighteen months ago; instead I found the same man I had known in England. I questioned him and in answer he picked up a letter from his desk. It was from an officer of his battalion and was addressed to another officer who was convalescing in England. It ran, "I suppose you have heard of the luck—the wonderful luck—of that incompetent Rowe. Of course the man"—Anger! I was so angry that I could not read more, the malicious stupidity of the thing amazed me. I dropped the letter and swore luridly, but nothing I could say or do would change Jerry's mood.

While I was on leave in England I heard that Jerry had gone back to his unit and was second-in-command of a company. There I found him on my return to duty.

## V.

A few days later we received orders to attack. Jerry's battalion started the advance and had heavy losses, including their commanding officer. A German counter attack drove us back into our trenches. The losses were tremendous, the—th having lost their second-in-command and two company commanders. We surged forward again, men were dying like flies, the din was deafening. Officer after officer fell. Our battalion became merged with Jerry's. The line wavered before the awful fire. Hardly an officer remained alive. Suddenly I saw a young officer, capless and with his brown hair tumbled over his forehead, spring in front of the disorganized units and with a shout lead them on. At the top of the parapet he stopped, wavered, and fell, revolver in hand, dead.

We buried him behind our old line and as we nailed two rough slabs of wood to mark his grave, the Adjutant scratched upon them,

"CAPTAIN GERALD ROWE, M.C."

"THE COMPETENT"

An Irish and a Scotch soldier were discussing the Great War. They were both becoming quite excited when the Scotchman made use of his national exclamation "Hoot, mon." The Irishman was astonished. "Hoot! did ye say," answered he; "hoot yerself, ye're more of an owl than I am."

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